

## **CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING ETHOS**

In St. Colm's we have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and non-teaching should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This Policy sets out guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school.

### **SAFEGUARDING**

Safeguarding is more than child protection. Safeguarding begins with promotion and preventative activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection.

Safeguarding is not just about protecting children from deliberate harm. It includes issues such as:

- Pupil's health and safety
- Bullying
- Racist abuse
- Harassment and discrimination
- Use of physical intervention
- Meeting the needs of pupils with medical conditions
- Providing first aid
- Drug and substance misuse
- Educational visits
- Intimate care
- Internet safety
- School security
- School / local specific issues
- Pupils' sexuality

### **CHILD PROTECTION**

Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm.

In all matters in relation to safeguarding and child protection procedures and policies, the best interest of the child must be the paramount consideration. (CDE 2017/04)

### **PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools, Circular 20/7/04 Child and the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

(Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures)

Our responsibility in Child Protection issues is reflected in the following principles:

- We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- The child's welfare must always be paramount and this overrides all other considerations.
- Children have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously taking account of their age and understanding. They should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions which may affect their lives.
- The process of protecting the child from harm should be carried out with the parent/carers involvement whenever possible and they should be encouraged to exercise their responsibilities. Where there is conflict the child's interests are paramount.
- Information exchange between the child, the parents/carers and all the professional disciplines involved is of the utmost importance.
- A commitment to supporting parents/carers to prevent harm or further harm and alerting them to the dangers for children is the core of good child protection work.
- Actions taken to protect a child (including investigation) should not in themselves be abusive by causing a child unnecessary distress or adding to any damage already suffered.
- At all times the emphasis must be on a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach and commitment to the protection, support and safeguarding of children from harm.
- Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation. The child must be seen in a family setting. The criminal dimension of any action cannot be ignored.
- When making decisions and carrying out investigations and assessments professionals should be guided by the child's best interests. Decisions should take into account both the wishes of the child, having due regard to age and understanding and the wishes of the parents/carers. It must be recognised however that there may be circumstances which dictate that these have to be over-ridden.
- Where it is necessary to protect a child from further abuse/harm, alternatives which do not involve moving the child and which minimise disruption of a family should be explored.
- Each agency must have an understanding of each other's professional values and accept other's role, powers and responsibilities.

- Actions taken by agencies must be considered and well informed so that they are sensitive to and take account of the child's gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race.

## **THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

This Safeguarding Team is a vehicle for ensuring effective co-ordination and co-operation between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding throughout the school.

Our team is:

Chair of Governors: P. McShane

Designated Governor for Child Protection: P. Cassidy

Deputy Designated Governor: P. McShane

Principal: R McKenna

Designated teacher for Child Protection: Ca. Devlin

Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection: R. McKenna

This has been ratified by the Board of Governors: 2020

The responsibilities of the team should include:

- The monitoring and periodic review of Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements in the school.
- Support for the Designated Teacher in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities, including recognition of the administrative and emotional demands of the post.
- Ensuring attendance of Governors and staff at relevant training – including refresher training – in keeping with legislative and best practice requirements.

The Safeguarding Team meet annually.

## **ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER (DT) AND DEPUTY DESIGNATED TEACHER (DDT)**

### **The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher must:**

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role
- Provide training to all school staff including support staff
- Be able to discuss the child protection concerns of any member of staff
- Act as a point of contact for staff and parents
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection Unit where appropriate
- Be responsible for record keeping of all child protection concerns
- Make referrals to Social Services or PSNI Public Protection Units
- Liaise with NEELB/CCMS Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Keep the school Principal informed
- Lead responsibility for the development and updating of the school's Child Protection Policy
- Ensure parents receive Child Protection information every two years which alerts them to the fact that referrals may be made to social services and the role of the school regarding this
- Promote a Child Protection ethos in the school
- Provide written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection
- Maintain all records pertaining to Child Protection in a secure location (accessed only by the Designated Teacher and the School Principal as appropriate)
- Support and undertake the duties of the designate teacher for Child Protection as required

Confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.

### **The Principal**

The Principal must ensure that:

- The Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools document (DENI, 2017) is implemented
- He / She attends training on Managing Safeguarding and Child Protection
- A designated teacher and deputy designated teacher are appointed
- All staff receive child protection training
- All necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- The Chair of the Board of Governors is kept informed
- Child protection activities feature on the agenda of the Board of Governors meetings and termly updates & annual report are provided
- The school's child protection policy is reviewed annually and that parents and pupils receive a copy/summary of this policy at least once every 2 years
- Confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.
- He/She undertakes the specific management responsibilities of Risk Assessment / Safeguarding in a digital world, managing allegations against staff.

## **The Designated Governor for Child Protection**

The Designated Governor should avail of child protection awareness training delivered by CPSSS and will take the lead in child protection issues in order to advise the Governors on:

- The role of the Designated Teachers
- The content of child protection policies
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school
- The content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teacher Reports
- Recruitment, selection and vetting of staff

## **The Chair of the Board of Governors**

The Chair of the Board of Governors should:

- Ensure that he/ she has received appropriate Education Authority training
- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment
- Ensure that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy
- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment & selection training provided by the Child Protection Support Service for Schools {CPSSS} and the Governor Support and Human Resource departments.
- Ensure that a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the School Principal
- Ensure that the Board of Governors receive termly updates and a full written annual report in relation to child protection activity

## **The Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors must ensure that the school fulfils its responsibilities in keeping with current legislation and DE guidance including

- having a Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually
- having a staff code of conduct for all adults working in the school
- attendance at relevant training by governors and that up-to-date training records are maintained
- the vetting of all staff and volunteers.

Under Articles 17 and 18 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003, the Board of Governors is committed to the safeguarding and promotion of all pupils under school provision and to decide on preventative measures to protect pupils from abuse. These measures are detailed in this policy and in the Anti bullying policy.

## Members of School Staff

The member of staff must:

- refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Teacher for Child Protection/Principal
- listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief and support the child
- act promptly
- make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child
- avail of whole school training and relevant other training regarding safeguarding children
- **Not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures
- **Not** investigate
- **Not** ask leading questions

### **In addition, the Class Teacher should:**

- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying, concerns about home conditions including disclosures of domestic violence.

Staff in school see children over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and hear allegations of abuse.

They should remember the **5 Rs: *Receive, Reassure, Respond, Record and Refer***

## Parents

Parents should play their part in safeguarding by:

- telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's situation;
- informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to pick up the child after school;
- letting the school know in advance if their child is going home to an address other than their own home;
- familiarising themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Anti Bullying, Positive Behaviour, Internet and Child Protection Policies;
- reporting to the office when they visit the school
- raising concerns they have in relation to their child with the school.

## **Vetting of Volunteers**

Parents and other volunteers may from time to time be involved in supervising pupils. This will normally be in the company of a teacher. Where it is likely that a parent or volunteer will be left alone with pupils, a Criminal Record check will be sought by the school through the Education Authority's Access NI.

## **Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Group Meetings**

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher or Principal may be invited to attend an initial and review Child Protection Case Conferences and/or core group meetings convened by the Health & Social Care Trust. They will provide a written report which will be compiled following consultation with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection register will be monitored and supported in accordance with the child protection plan.

## **Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. Where abuse is suspected schools have a legal duty to refer to the Statutory Agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a 'need to know' basis.

Should a child transfer to another school whilst there are current child protection concerns we will share these concerns with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school.

## **Record Keeping**

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the child or young person and are only accessible by the DT and DDT. In accordance with DE policy on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored until the child is 30 years old. Files are not removed from the school premises, except when required at a case planning order or by demand of a court order. A record will be kept of when information is removed by whom, for what purpose, and when it is returned. Full details are available in the Records Management and Disposal policy.

## **Code of Conduct for all Staff**

The protection and promotion of the welfare of children and young people is a responsibility for all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching. In meeting this, staff should work towards a culture of mutual trust and respect in school through which the best interests of the children and young people entrusted to their care is paramount.

Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the child and young people in their charge must be above reproach. The school's code of conduct is an integral part of staff training and is available on request.

## **Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

We recognise that young people with disabilities (i.e. any child or young person who has a physical, sensory or learning impairment or a significant health condition) may be more vulnerable to abuse. Staff and DT/DDT are aware of any vulnerability factors associated with risk of harm, and any emerging child protection issues. Staff are aware that communication difficulties can be hidden or overlooked making disclosure particularly difficult. Where physical contact is a necessary part of caring/teaching some pupils with special educational needs, an Intimate Care Policy is completed and parental permission sought. Children with limited fluency in English work closely with our SEN co-ordinator. Parents receive a Safeguarding Policy created by the EA's Inclusion and Diversity Service where necessary and seek advice from them to identify and respond to any particular communication needs that a child may have.

## **Staff Training**

St. Colm's is committed to in-service training for its entire staff. All staff will receive child protection awareness training and biannual refresher training. The Principal/Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher, Chair of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend relevant child protection training courses provided by the Child Protection Support Service for Schools. Depending on roles of responsibility specific staff may receive further training.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct and receive copies of these policies.

## **Monitoring and Reviewing**

This policy is reviewed annually in line with DENI circulars and relevant letters of information and ratified by the Board of Governors.

## **Associated Policies:**

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Child Protection: Record Management and Disposal
- Positive Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying
- Use of Reasonable Force
- Special Educational Needs and Inclusion
- Educational Visits
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- E Safety and Acceptable Use of the Internet
- Intimate Care
- Whistleblowing
- Attendance policy
- Pastoral Care
- Educational Visits

These policies are available to parents and any parent requiring a copy should contact the School.

## WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

A child is a person under the age of 18 years as defined in the Children Order.

Child Abuse occurs when ‘a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger’.

A child in need of protection is a child who is at risk of, or likely to suffer significant harm which can be attributed to a person or persons or organisation, either by an act of commission or omission; or a child who has suffered or is suffering significant harm. Harm means ill treatment or the impairment of health or development and the question of whether harm is significant is determined in accordance with Article 50(3) of the Children’s Order. (Safeguarding and Child Protection 2017/04.)

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm or significant harm.

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Exploitation

(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. Version 2.0 2017)

The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards a child.

(ACPC2005)

### 1. Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child’s basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child’s health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

### Physical Indicators

Failure to thrive with no medical cause identified, developmental delay in all areas. Poor hygiene, untreated head lice or other infestations, inappropriate dress for the weather. Lack of supervision, caring for other children. Malnourished or abnormal eating behaviour – bingeing or hoarding. Anaemia, untreated/unmet medical needs. Poor and unsafe home conditions.

### Behavioural Indicators

Developmental delay/special needs, presents as under stimulated. Abnormal reaction to separation-attachment disorder. Poor school attendance and/or school performance. Poor social skills,

overactive and/or aggressive (distress behaviours). Offending behaviour including stealing food. Is very needy/demanding of affection or attention. Has no understanding of basic hygiene.

## **2. Physical Abuse**

Is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child, or giving drugs inappropriately to control behaviour.

### **Physical Indicators**

Unexplained bruises – in various stages of healing – grip marks on arms; slap marks; human bite marks; welts; bald spots; unexplained/untreated burns; especially cigarette burns (glove like); unexplained fractures; lacerations; or abrasions; untreated injuries; bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday

### **Behavioural Indicators**

Self-destructive tendencies; aggressive to other children; behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults; improbable excuses to explain injuries; chronic runaway; uncomfortable with physical contact; come to school early or stays last as if afraid to be at home; clothing inappropriate to weather – to hide part of body; violent themes in art work or stories

## **3. Sexual Abuse**

Occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Please note that coercive, exploitative and harmful behaviour includes taking advantage of an individual's incapacity to give informed consent. Stopping Domestic and Sexual/Violence and Abuse in NI,16, Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools '17.

### **Physical Indicators**

Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs; bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas; torn, stained or bloody underclothes; chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches; difficulty in walking or sitting; frequent urinary infections; avoidance of lessons especially PE, games, showers; unexplained pregnancies where the identity of the father is vague; anorexia/gross over-eating.

**Behavioural Indicators**

What the child tells you; withdrawn; chronic depression; excessive sexual precociousness; seductiveness; children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality; parent/child role reversal; over concerned for siblings; poor self-esteem; self-devaluation; lack of confidence; peer problems; lack of involvement; massive weight change; suicide attempts (especially adolescents); hysterical/angry outbursts; lack of emotional control; sudden school difficulties e.g. deterioration in school work or behaviour; inappropriate sex play; repeated attempts to run away from home; unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories; vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity; exposure to pornographic material.

**Child Sexual Exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and / or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

**4. Emotional Abuse**

Is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of the other person. It may involve causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. It may include not giving a child opportunity to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying - including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones - by a child's peers. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

**Physical Indicators**

Under-protection or over-protection which has a significant negative impact on a child's development. Development delay. Repeated illnesses, severe toileting problems. Eating disorders – anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Sleep problems.

**Behavioural Indicators**

Symptoms of depression, anxiety, withdrawal. Symptoms of self-destructive behaviour – self harming suicide attempts, engaging in drug or alcohol abuse. Low self-esteem and low expectation of others, unable to accept praise or to trust. Extremes of self-

stimulatory behaviours head banging, comfort seeking, masturbation. Sudden school problems – poor concentration, falling standards. Over serious, apathetic, no sense of pleasure in achievement.

### **Domestic Violence and Abuse**

It is now recognised that children who live in an atmosphere of domestic violence may be at risk. Domestic violence is defined as threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member. (Stopping Domestic and Sexual/Violence and Abuse in NI,16, Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools ‘17.)

Symptoms which young people may display and which are only indicators include:

#### **Physical Indicators**

- Nightmares / flashbacks
- Stomach pain
- Bed wetting
- Truancy
- Alcohol and drugs

#### **Behaviour Indicators**

- Low self-worth
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Physiological – stress / nerves
- Immature / needy behaviour
- Temper tantrums
- Aggression
- Internalising distress or withdrawal
- Bullying

These symptoms can lead to a child/ young person being misdiagnosed as having an illness, learning difficulties, or being naughty or disruptive.

**If it comes to the attention of school staff that domestic abuse is or may be a factor for a child/young person this must be passed to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information to Social Services.**

**Exploitation** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

**A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.**

### **Associated Issues**

In training, staff are alerted to the following issues:

- Safety / internet Abuse

- Sexting
- Self-Harm
- Forced Marriage
- Female Genital Mutation
- Gender Identity / Sexual Orientation
- Harmful Sexualised Behaviour

### **How a Parent can make a Complaint**

We aim to work closely with parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of their child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent has a concern they can talk to the class teacher or any member of the school's safeguarding team: the Principal, the Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher for child protection. If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Public Protection Unit.

(Gateway Team Tel: 0800 7837745, PSNI Public Protection Unit Tel: 101, Ask for PPU in the E District) or the PSNI Central Referral Unit 028 902 59299

Should a parent feel that after the above steps have been completed and there is no resolution, they can contact the Police Ombudsman. Tel: 0800 343 424

The procedure is shown below:

## How a Parent can make a Complaint

I have a concern about my/a child's safety



I can talk to the class/form teacher



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the designated/deputy designated teacher for child protection Mrs Ca. Devlin or the Principal Mrs R. Mc Kenna



If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chair of the Board of Governors.



At any time a parent can talk to a Social Worker at the Gateway Team

**Tel: 0800 783 7745** {Free Phone from a Landline}

Or can contact the PSNI Public Protection Unit



Should a parent feel that after the above steps have been completed and there is no resolution, they can contact the Police Ombudsman.

Tel: 0800 343 424